Department of Transportation

SHADOW SECRETARY EDWIN S. RUBENSTEIN

> The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) is responsible for shaping and administering policies to protect and enhance the safety, adequacy, and efficiency of the Nation's transportation system and services. http://www.dot.gov/perfacc2003/ataglance.htm

Created in 1967, DOT initially included the Coast Guard, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). In 1968, the mass transit programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development were transferred to DOT; the unit overseeing them is now called the Federal Transit Administration. http://www.dot.gov/perfacc2003/ataglance.htm

Immigration Fiscal Impact Statement

Reducing Traffic Congestion

Whether it takes the form of commuters and trucks stalled in traffic or airplanes circling crowded airports, congestion is costing America an estimated $200 billion a year. http://www.dot.gov/stratplan2011/redcong.htm Americans spent 3.7 billion hours in traffic in 2003, the last year for which such data are available—more than a fivefold increase from just 21 years earlier. http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/070429/7gridlock.htm We burn 2.3 billion gallons of fuel each year in traffic jams and waste $9.4 billion as a result of airline delays. http://www.dot.gov/stratplan2011/redcong.htm

At its most basic level, congestion is the result of population growth outpacing road building. America has about 70 million more people than it did a quarter century ago, but highway miles have increased by a little more than 5 percent over that period. And the gap between population growth and road capacity growth will only get worse: DOT estimates that the demand for ground transportation—either by road or rail—will be 2 ½ times as great by 2050, while highway capacity is projected to rise by only 10 percent during that time. http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/070429/7gridlock.htm

Immigration is the most important factor driving population growth—and commuter traffic—in urban areas. Immigrants are more likely than natives to live in metropolitan areas (90 percent do), and within metropolitan areas, in central cities over suburbs (55 to 45 percent). http://gop.science.house.gov/hearings/ets03/apr10/meyer.htm

Recent immigrants are less likely to own automobiles and more likely to commute to work via mass transit. Carpooling, like transit, is also much more common among immigrants, nearly 22 percent for those here less than five years versus less than 11 percent of U.S. born. Over time, however, the travel patterns of immigrants resemble those of the U.S. born. For those here over 20 years, there is practically no difference. (Chuck Purvis, "Commuting Patterns of Immigrants," Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Oakland. August 2003. http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ctpp/sr0803.htm)

Even in the short run, immigrants add to traffic congestion woes. Cities with large immigrant populations experience larger increases in suburb-to-core commuter traffic—with many of the new suburban commuters having lived in urban cores until displaced by immigrants.

More importantly, immigrants increase population density in metropolitan areas:

> For economic reasons, immigrants often live with more people per dwelling unit than do native-born residents; when

Fulton et al. (2001) conducted a study on sprawl for the Brookings Institution, they found that the single most important variable in explaining changes of density between 1982 and 1997 was the share of 1990 residents who were foreign born. Los Angeles, as a major immigrant port of entry, ranks near the top of their list of the United States' densest urban areas, and the top 20 are dominated by western urban areas like Phoenix, Modesto, Calif., and Fresno, Calif. Fulton et al. (2001) point as a counterexample to low-density Atlanta, where only 4.1 percent of the residents were foreign born in 1990. (Michael Manville and Donald Shoup, "Parking, People, and Cities," *Journal of Urban Planning and Development*, December 2005. http://shoup.bol.ucla.edu/People,Parking,CitiesJUPD.pdf)

As density increases, so too does congestion, in part because it is hard to add more street space in areas that are already heavily developed. Most new lane mileage is instead built on the urban fringe.

Until recently, mass transit was seen as the best way of reducing metropolitan area highway congestion. There are some success stories. For example: "Less than 18 months after the October 2005 opening of the city's [Los Angeles's] Orange Line a high-speed bus line using an old railroad right of way to avoid traffic-ridership had reached the city's 2020 projections. And unlike nearly every other city, Los Angeles drivers spend less time in traffic now than they did a decade ago, thanks to both mass transit and aggressive traffic management." http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/070429/7gridlock.htm

But experts are increasingly skeptical that public transportation offers a real solution. In the 2000 census, just 4.7 percent of people said they used public transit to get to work. Transit represents only 2 percent of daily trips in Southern California. In most cities, even if the percentage of trips using transit tripled, which is not likely, the resulting drop in congestion would be overwhelmed by the projected growth in population.

And expanding mass transit capacity is extraordinarily expensive. Los Angeles's Mayor Villaraigosa estimates that a public transit system that would seriously reduce congestion, rather than just slowing its growth, would require funding "that has heretofore been unprecedented. I'm talking about ... tens of billions of dollars and beyond." That's in Los Angeles alone. http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/070429/7gridlock.htm

The prohibitive cost of building new mass transportation infrastructure is one factor behind DOT's new congestion initiative, announced last year. In fiscal year (FY) 2008 the program will make $175 million available to local governments to demonstrate innovative ideas for curbing congestion. http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2008/pdf/budget/transportation.pdf

> A select number of large-scale pilot projects would be chosen based on their willingness to implement a comprehensive congestion reduction strategy. That strategy would include a broad demonstration of some form of congestion pricing, commuter transit services, commitments from employers to expand work schedule flexibility, and faster deployment of real-time traffic information. http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2008/pdf/budget/transportation.pdf

Clearly, DOT's anti-congestion strategy emphasizes efficiency—that is, making better use of existing infrastructure—rather than building new roads and mass transit facilities. Urban choke points are its major focus. Only $25 million is earmarked for expanding capacity along interstate highways and trade corridors. http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2008/pdf/budget/transportation.pdf

"Cordon tolls," which charge drivers upon entering crowded urban centers, are already in place in London and Singapore; Mayor Bloomberg's proposed $8 charge for entering Manhattan, assessed using EZ-pass technology and cameras, would be the first in the United States. Tolls that vary with the time of day and congestion can increase the number of cars able to travel on existing roads by 40 percent, according to DOT.

But politics takes a heavy toll on congestion toll plans. Bloomberg's proposal faces an uphill battle in the state legislature. Trucking unions oppose the plan, and suburban politicians are generally unwilling to support a plan that would place a daily charge on many of their constituents. The Mayor's pledge to increase mass transit to compensate for the toll hasn't changed many minds.

Population increases and demographic shifts lead to suburban sprawl, which creates transportation gridlock on America's roads.

Another option—High Occupancy Transit (HOT) lanes—in which drivers who carpool or use buses are charged lower tolls—has proved effective in several states. But here too, politics often intervenes. HOT lanes are derided as "Lexus lanes" for the wealthy. More importantly, HOT lanes lack the major advantages of universal tolls, since drivers can still use the un-tolled lanes, and they don't discourage drivers from traveling in peak travel periods.

Implication: While increasing roadways, congestion tolls, and enhanced driver information can help decrease traffic congestion, the problem will continue to grow unless population growth is slowed.

The bottom line: Enforcing immigration laws may be the most cost-effective technique for controlling traffic congestion in urban areas.

DOT's Language Mandate

More than 10 million people in the United States are of limited English proficiency (LEP), meaning that they do not speak English at all, or do not speak it well. The vast majority of these persons are immigrants. They tend to rely on public transit more than English speakers.

On August 11, 2000, President Clinton issued Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency." E.O. 13166 requires each federal agency to implement a system by which LEP persons can access its services without unduly burdening the agency's fundamental mission.

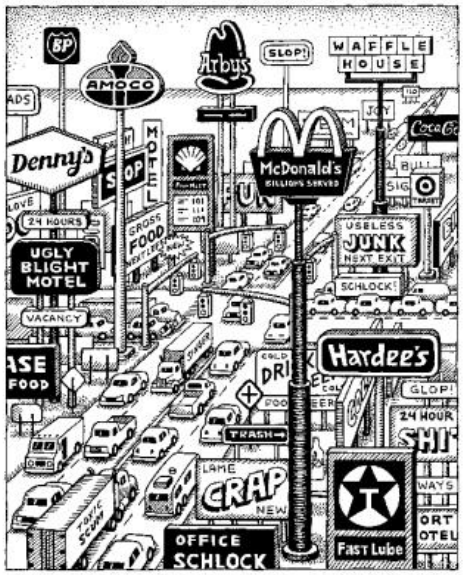
In complying with the order, DOT required all its funding recipients to ensure meaningful access by LEP persons. Special services include translated brochures and signs; multilingual telephone lines; bilingual drivers; and interpreters at public meetings. The mandate applies to all state departments of transportation, state motor vehicle administrations, airport operators, metropolitan planning organizations, and regional, state, and local transit operators.

Here are some of the "promising practices" identified in DOT's report on its LEP effort:

> The Iowa Department of Transportation provides a Spanish version of the Commercial Driver's License knowledge test using a touch screen computer, and study guides of the Iowa Driver's Manual in Albanian, Bosnian, Russian, Vietnamese, and Korean.
>
> The New Jersey Department of Motor Vehicles administers driver's license tests in more than 15 languages, including Arabic, French, Greek, Korean, Portuguese, and Turkish.
>
> New York City Transit MetroCard vending machines are located in every station and contain software that allows them to be programmed in three languages in addition to English, based upon area demographics. Currently, these machines

are capable of providing information in Spanish, French, French Creole, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Italian, Korean, Greek, and Polish.

The Idaho Office of Traffic and Highway Safety implemented a Spanish-language safety belt media campaign to educate its Hispanic community on the statewide "Click It, Don't Risk It!" program to boost seat belt use.



The Salt Lake City International Airport maintains a list of 35 bilingual and multilingual employees who speak one of 19 languages (including three dialects of Chinese) and their contact information. The list is published in the Airport Information Handbook and provided to all airport employees. The airport also contracts with a telephonic interpretation service to provide on-demand telephone interpretation services to beneficiaries.

In preparation of its 20-year planning document, the Transportation Concept Report, the California Department of Transportation held a public meeting titled "Planning the Future of Highway 1" in the largely Hispanic city of Guadalupe, through which Highway 1 runs. The meeting was broadcast on the local public access channel since many of the Spanish-speaking residents potentially affected by Highway 1 projects rely on the channel to receive public affairs information. The department provided a Spanish-language interpreter during the meeting and also made its Spanish-speaking public affairs officer available to meet with participants individually.

Coverage extends to a recipient's entire program or activity, that is, to all parts of a recipient's operations. This is true even if only one program receives federal assistance. Thus if U.S. DOT provides assistance to rehabilitate a particular highway in a state—and for nothing else—all of the operations of the state DOT, including mass transit, are covered by the U.S. DOT's LEP guidelines.

Most mass transit agencies do not view LEP language access costs as burdensome. A GAO survey found about one-half of such agencies spent between $10,000 and $30,000; one quarter reported annual costs of less than $5000; and one-quarter reported costs greater than $100,000. http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d0652high.pdf

Indeed, many agencies believe that providing services to LEP populations makes good business sense, and that the resulting increases to mass transit ridership may pay for the services.

But LEP-related costs rise dramatically as the number of languages for which translations and special services are needed rises. Agencies that currently use existing staff to translate for Spanish speakers would have to contract out in order to accommodate those speaking other languages.

Transportation websites are also expensive to modify. For example, the Chicago Transit Authority estimates that the initial costs of translating its web-site into Spanish, Chinese, and Polish would be between $74,000 and $90,000. Ongoing costs would also be substantial. Updating just the Spanish section of a translated web-site would require a new full-time employee and the purchase of additional software costing about $60,000 annually, according to agency officials. http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d0652high.pdf

As the linguistic diversity of the LEP population grows, the cost of providing language services could outweigh any commercial benefit. ■